

REMARKS

This Amendment addresses the issues outstanding from the final Office Action dated May 25, 2007.

Applicants respectfully request favorable reconsideration of this application, as amended.

As a preliminary matter, Applicants respectfully reiterate their request that the priority document be acknowledged.

Turning to the merits, Claims 1-2, 4, 6-8, 10, 12-14, 16, and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Murakami et al. (US 6990874). Claims 3, 5, 9, 11, 15, and 17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Murakami et al. in view of Ryne et al. (US 2002/0066333).

While Applicants respectfully disagree with Examiner's characterization of the Murakami reference, independent Claims 1, 7, and 13 have nonetheless been amended to clarify certain distinctive aspects of Applicants' invention. More particularly, Claims 1 and 7 have been amended to recite, *inter alia*, the distance unit being formed as an expanded portion of the steering column with the steering shaft passing therethrough. Amended Claims 1 and 7 further recite that the adjusting bolt is positioned, within the distance unit of the steering column, between the steering shaft and an upper wall of the steering column. Claim 13 has been

amended to recite, *inter alia*, a steering column being formed with an expanded portion with the steering shaft passing therethrough. Amended Claim 13 further recites that the adjusting bolt is positioned, within the expanded portion of the steering column, between the steering shaft and an upper wall of the steering column.

In contrast to Applicants' claimed invention, Murakami discloses an upper bracket (12) that fixes the steering column to the vehicle body (Murakami, col. 3, lines 26-29). It is clear that this bracket in Murakami does not constitute an expanded portion of the steering column, much less one through which a steering shaft passes.

Murakami further fails to disclose an adjusting bolt positioned, within an expanded portion of the steering column, between the steering shaft and an upper wall of the steering column, as recited in Applicants' amended claims.

It is apparent that the Murakami reference neither discloses nor suggests a steering column arrangement as now particularly set forth in Claims 1, 7, and 13 as discussed above. Nor does Ryne overcome the evident deficiencies of Murakami.

Accordingly, Claims 1, 7, and 13 are patentable over the applied references and are now in condition for allowance. The dependent claims are of course allowable for

at least the reasons discussed above regarding their respective independent claims.

It is therefore respectfully urged that the outstanding rejections be withdrawn and that this application now be passed to issue.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 (XA-10269) any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been separately requested, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

By:



Mitchell W. Shapiro
Reg. No. 31,568

Michael A. Minter
Reg. No. 58,797

Miles & Stockbridge, P.C.
1751 Pinnacle Drive
Suite 500
McLean, Virginia 22102-3833
(703) 903-9000

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